**Structured Small Group Program Template**

**Rock-It Towards Success**

**Goal/ Purpose**

The purpose of this group program is for 5th grade students, (both male and female), to orally express their feelings towards taking a test, then learning effective test taking skills, and cognitively use these skills to apply them toward their test taking ability, to increase their academic achievement and progress; in which teachers and professional school counselors correlate with one another to part-take with students’ academic success. Students will learn the proper test taking techniques with the use of resources to gain an understanding on test tips to effectively and efficiently practice while taking a test.

Highland Park Elementary School’s mission is, “**Highland Park staff, parents and community work together to help students develop skills necessary to be productive citizens in a diverse, rapidly changing, global society.”**

The goal of this program is that the students will be able to acquire knowledge of test taking skills and apply these skills towards their academics and progress.The students will be attempting to accomplish this program through actively listening and engaging, recall, and apply the acquired skills to help them perform excellence on their academics. A pre and post-survey on test taking tips will be given out and evaluate to provide valuable information on the effectiveness of applying test taking tips during a test.

The goal of the session, Shoot for the Stars will be effective for the group as a whole, in which they will collaborate with one another through sharing their feelings towards taking test, discuss the test-taking skills they use or will use during a test to excel in their academics.

This session will correlate with their Virginia Standards of Learning.

**Oral Language**

**5.1 The student will listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities.**

1. Participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas.
2. Organize information to present reports of group activities.
3. Summarize information gathered in group activities.

The ASCA National Standards for Students will tie into this session through:

**A:B2: Plan To Achieve Goals**

A:B2.2 Use assessments results in educational planning.

A.B2.3 Develop and implement annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement.

A.B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

The goal for Rock-N-Roll with an A, applies to the students with their test taking tips to effectively use to promote academic success.

The Virginia Standards of Learning will be applied towards this session.

### Oral Language

**5.1 The student will listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities.**

1. Participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas.
2. Organize information to present reports of group activities.
3. Summarize information gathered in group activities.

**5.3 The student will make planned oral presentations.**

1. Determine appropriate content for audience.
2. Organize content sequentially or around major ideas.
3. Summarize main points before or after presentation.
4. Incorporate visual aids to support the presentation.
5. Use grammatically correct language and specific vocabulary.

**The ASCA National Standards for Students will also tie into this session through:**

**A:A2 Acquire Skills Improving Learning**

A:A2.2. Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning.

A:A2.3 Use communication skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed.

A:A2.4. Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influence school performance.

**Population**

The group is for students both male and female in the 5th grade.

**Rationale/ Need**

In order for students to achieve academic success, students must be familiar with the components that are articulated with academic success and progress. Test taking skills are skills students will need to become familiar with in order to excel. Based on the pre and post-surveys, an evaluation toward the results of this survey will determine the success of test taking tips. Also the results of tests students took prior and after session will be viewed to see if the student has made any signs of improvement. By looking through two resourceful data information from teacher observation of students and to determine and meet their needs in order to successfully complete a test, this will also be processed and used to help determine the students’ strengths and weakness of their test-taking ability. The use of teacher feedback and observation of students, this will determine whether or not the student will qualify for group counseling session. A survey for students will be given during the initial stage of the session, concerning their personal thought about their test taking habits. By attending these sessions the students will become aware of the problem in which they will be assisted towards the right direction to get them back on track, eliminate test anxiety, and improve their test-taking skills.

A needs assessment is conducted in 4 stages:

1. **Planning –** Students in 5th grade will be given pre and post-surveys and will be observed in compliance of their test taking ability. Data will be determined through various tests prior and after group session, that are given by the teacher and the results from the test will be taken and analyzed. Surveys will be given to students asking them to distinguish what skills they use for a test, what feeling they have toward test- readiness. Then a group discussion will be on their and the overall feelings whether it relates to their strengths and weaknesses, distraction, emotions, and feelings towards taking a test.
2. **Collecting data –** Data will be collected through prior and after session test results, given by the teacher. The post-survey will be viewed an analyzed in comparison from the pre-survey, given to the student at the first session. Also through the interaction through group session of those students, they will discuss anything related to taking a test.
3. **Analyzing the data –** With the use of pre and post-surveys, the results of these surveys will be analyzed. Possibly during group sessions, discuss test-taking tips that students found to be useful for them. Compare and contrast what the students’ found to be helpful or hurtful while taking a test. Come up with valid test taking tips as a whole for students to remember and effectively use. Using test results of the students prior and after session, to determine whether or not their were signs of progress and if the skills were related to their improvement.
4. **Compiling a report –** The assessments’ purpose will be determined if effective test taking techniques were viewed as resourceful contributes for students to attain academic achievement and progress. Analyzing the information of both pre and post-surveys will verify whether or not students’ adapted test-taking skills during a test and if there were signs of progression.

**Educational Needs (Burton & Merrill, 1991):**

The needs of this assessment are the normative and felt need. The normative need is for students to effectively use test-taking tips in order to excel and progress academically. The felt need would be the emotional desire to want to succeed and improve their test taking skills, through motivation and encouragement of themselves and their teachers, professional school counselor, school staff, and parents in order to do well on their academics.

**Theoretical Orientation**

The theoretical approach toward these program sessions is Cognitive behavioral theory. This approach is done to eliminate stress and increase self-help relaxation and test taking skills. The specific techniques used for group session will consist of: discussing feelings and emotions of reflection and feedback, promote automatic thought, finding specific target areas and trying to change, and homework. According to Beidel, Taylor-Ferreira, and Turner, they decided to reduce test anxiety, students needed to become more aware of test taking strategies. Test-wiseness programs encompass strategies designed to increase children’s sophistication with testing procedures and have been promoted as an effective tool for increasing test performance and school achievement. (Beidel, Taylor-Ferreira, and Turner, 1999). These sessions will correlate with teachers’ SOL lesson plans in the subject of English, through test taking skills without breaking away from their core curriculum.

**Ethical, Legal, and Multicultural Issues**

The ethical, legal, and multicultural considerations in group work will be implied. Students will first come into group sessions and be introduced to confidentiality and aware them of what can or cannot be shared outside of session. The FERPA act will come into play and will be enforced. As a Counselor, planning sessions will be made accordingly to students’ needs to help improve their academic success and goals, while focusing on the Virginia Standards of Learning. Working with students of a different ethical background or diversity, will be included in session. As every other student, I would want them feel as comfortable as possible, reassure them that because they may be different from other students they are unique and that the professional school counselor, teachers, parents, school administrators are all trying to work toward the same goal for all students regardless of diversity which is for all students obtain academic success. Maspons, 1983, did a study on Hispanic students on test-taking strategies and determined that,

The results of the study indicate that Hispanic students can profit from a short training in these skills. They also indicate that the psychometric properties of the instruments used to evaluate Hispanic students may be improved by training provided to the student.

Although this resource was determined several years ago, the content shows evidence that teaching regardless of diversity will be able to use test-taking skills they have learned, acquired, and apply towards successfully taking a test. When dealing with multicultural students, the use Cognitive behavioral theory comes into light; there are some factors that help these students cope in session.

Corey 2012, lists ways of facilitating this theory between CBT and diverse students:

* Both emphasize the need to tailor intervention to the unique needs and strengths of the individual.
* Both emphasize empowerment: CBT teaches clients specific skills that they can apply in daily like; multicultural therapy emphasized cultural influences contribute to a clients uniqueness,
* Both emphasize a strength model wherein the inner resources of the client are activated to bring about change.
* CBT’s behavioral roots call attention to the influence of environment, which fits well with the multicultural emphasis on cultural influences.
* Other factors that contribute to the usefulness of cognitive behavioral approached to group work with diverse client populations include its specificity, task orientation, focus on objectivity, emphasis on collaboration, focus on cognition and behavior, action orientation, dealing with the present more than the past, emphasis on brief interventions, and problem-solving orientation.

**Recruitment and Screening**

The recruitment of these sessions will be determine by the 5th grade teachers whose observation show significant indications of students having a difficult time taking a test, showing signs of anxiety, and the lack of test-readiness. These students will be given consent forms that are to be taken home and require parents’ consent and signature, in which their child may participate with Test Taking Skills sessions. The recruitment will take place within a month into the school year, to assist those students who may have difficulty on acquiring test taking skills and applying them toward tests. These sessions will take place as soon as all the parent consent forms are signed and turned in. The screening procedures will be the use of pre and post-surveys that allows students to express their personal opinions on a scale, of the emotions they experience during a test. These surveys will be given after the recruitment period, (when all forms are signed and turned in), and immediately dive into the sessions discuss their anxieties towards test taking, take the pre-survey, run the session programs and/or activates, take the post-survey, provide feedback and reflection at the end of each session, and then apply these skills and develop the test-taking skills.

**Structure**

The structure of these session will include effective test taking tips that students will acquire and use while taking a test in order to establish a distinguished the significance of test taking skills. The group will be determined as a closed group. There will be at least four sessions with the students of this group, the forth session will primarily consist of feedback, what they got out of these sessions, what was effective, what was not, what they find challenging, what they find easy, and etc. The post-survey will also be taken. These sessions will occur once a week, in a four-week span. The session will take place at 12:45 – 1:15, during the study hall time and will be held in the conference room at the school. This program will be offered twice during the school year.

**Core ASCA Standard(s)**

**A:B2: Plan To Achieve Goals**

A:B2.2 Use assessments results in educational planning.

A.B2.3 Develop and implement annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement.

A.B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

**A:A2 Acquire Skills Improving Learning**

A:A2.2. Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning.

A:A2.3 Use communication skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed.

A:A2.4. Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influence school performance.

**Core State Academic Standard(s)**

**Virginia Standards of Learning**

**Oral Language**

**5.1 The student will listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities.**

1. Participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas.
2. Organize information to present reports of group activities.
3. Summarize information gathered in group activities.

**5.3 The student will make planned oral presentations.**

1. Determine appropriate content for audience.
2. Organize content sequentially or around major ideas.
3. Summarize main points before or after presentation.
4. Incorporate visual aids to support the presentation.
5. Use grammatically correct language and specific vocabulary.

**Objectives**

1. **Performance**

* The student will actively participate and verbally express their feelings towards taking a test.
* The students will actively participate and verbally express the information they learned through the test-taking sessions.
* The student will be able to cognitively apply test-taking skills and use them effectively during a test.
* The student will be able to distinguish their achievement progress using the test-taking skills resulting from their tests.

1. **Conditions**

* Given the proper test-taking skills, the students will be able to successful use these test-taking skills on their tests.
* Given the proper test-taking skills, the student will be able to distinguish what set of test-taking skills they will use for a  
    
  specific test.

**3. Criterion**

* Students will imply these test-taking skills and excel on their core curriculum and show signs of progress.
* Students will be able to carefully analyze their test and use specific test-taking skills to complete the test.

**Program Evaluation**

The effectiveness of this structured group will be determined by the pre and post-surveys, teacher observations, and through their test grades after group session. The archival data from their prior test scores before group and after group will establish the active success students’ obtain, using specific test-taking tips. During each group sessions, students will openly discuss their emotions on taking a test. Then session will consist of effective test-taking skills that students will need to acquire and then apply toward their test. Then toward the end of group, students will again discuss and reflect on what they learned and how they will put what they learn into effect, take the post-survey, and determine whether or not the skills or session have showed signs of improvement on their academics.

Abidin & Pour-Mohammadi, 2011, conducted research on whether or not test-taking skills were effective towards test performance;

and found that:

The results proposed that (1) the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies had a positive relationship to the reading test performance, and (2) highly successful test-takers reported considerably higher metacognitive strategy use than the moderately successful ones who in turn reported higher use of these strategies than the unsuccessful test takers.

By strategies, they mean testing techniques. This study provides clear proof that teaching students test-taking skills are important concepts to understand and grasp, not only will students’ test scores improve, but the students self-efficacy and motivation will increase, which will result on signs of success, not only through academics but in life as well.

**Session 1**

**Title:** Shoot for the Stars

**Brief Summary of Session:** The students will discuss their feelings towards taking a test and may be reasons as to why they feel a certain way towards a test. Then they will be taught and given 10 effective test-taking skills they will learn and apply towards taking a test. Students will also demonstrate the necessary ASACA Standard and Virginia SOL included during this session.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Cognitive Behavioral Theory

**Specific Group Technique:** Test Taking Tips

**Duration:** 30-40 minutes

**Materials/ Media:** Ball of yarn, notecards, pens/markers, poster board, and glue

**Core ASCA Standard(s):**

**A:B2: Plan To Achieve Goals**

A:B2.2 Use assessments results in educational planning.

A.B2.3 Develop and implement annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement.

A.B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting.

**Core State Academic Standard(s):**

**Virginia Standards of Learning**

**Oral Language**

**5.1 The student will listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities.**

1. Participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas.
2. Organize information to present reports of group activities.
3. Summarize information gathered in group activities.

**Objectives:**

* The student will actively participate and verbally express their feelings towards taking a test.
* The students will actively participate and verbally express the information they learned through the test-taking sessions.
* Given the proper test-taking skills, the students will be able to successful use these test-taking skills on their tests.
* Students will imply these test-taking skills and excel on their core curriculum and show signs of progress.

**Assessments**: There will be pre and post-surveys that students will be given. There will dialogue assessments during sessions, where students will express their feelings, why they feel a certain way, be able to participate in group discussions about test-taking skills. Then students will come to an agreement that they will use the test-taking skills and apply it towards taking a test.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**

* 5th grade teachers choose students who come into this group session, because they have shown signs of text anxiety and lack of test-readiness. Students will come in and introduce themselves and with the use of a ball of yarn will take a piece of that yarn introduce themselves and discuss their feelings towards taking a test and why. I will then ask them questions towards their feelings and what they do to eliminate that feeling. They will pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting next to them and that person will continue and repeat the same the same step as the previous person. This will continue until all students in group have responded and the ball of yarn as created a web of testing feelings and emotions. The students will see how their own feeling is related towards everyone, in result everyone in group has a reason why they are there. This activity should take 7-10 minutes.
* I will then collect the ball of yarn and hand out a pre-survey requiring their own personal feelings towards their test-taking ability. This survey will take 10 minutes. I will then further discuss how two weeks from this session students will take a post-survey and see how their personal feelings towards the skills improved, stayed the same, and decreased.
* Next I will go over 10 effective test-taking skills. This activity should take 7 minutes.
* The groups activity will be that they will receive a shooting star with a number on the back and write the corresponding test skill. Then as a group they will each say their specific tip and discuss why this tip is important. The students will then tape their shooting star on to the Rocket poster board. At the end of this activity they will be able to view all the shooting stars/test-taking skills and see the importance of each skill. This activity should take 7 minutes.
* In conclusion, the group will discuss what was new that they learned. Then a YouTube video will play in hopes for encouragement to apply the test-taking skills towards their next test. A handout will also be given to the students to keep for a reminder of the test skills.

**Homework/ Ownwork**: Students will by next session, they are to write down a tip of tips they used or will use on their next test and whether or not they had the same feelings as they did at the beginning of group.

**Group Stage and Emerging Issues:** The group will be at the initial stage. A few issues that may arise during group are that students do not want to participate, express their feelings, think that they do not need to be in group, or realize they are experiencing some type of emotion or distraction while taking a test and they view group being beneficial.

**Session 2**

**Title:** Rock-N-Roll with an A

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Brief Summary of Session:** Students will return to session and discuss their feelings toward group and express whether they think it is beneficial or not. As a group we will have a discussion based on the homework that was assigned during the last session. Then do an activity based on which skills(s) they found helpful, neutral, not helpful, and modify/add. Students will also demonstrate the necessary ASACA Standard and Virginia SOL included during this session.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Cognitive Behavioral Theory

**Specific Group Technique:** Test Taking Tips

**Materials/ Media:** Notecards, pencils, Homework, List of 10 effective test-taking skills (optional)

### Core ASCA Standard(s):

**A:A2 Acquire Skills Improving Learning**

A:A2.2. Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning.

A:A2.3 Use communication skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed.

A:A2.4. Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influence school performance.

**Core State Academic Standard(s):**

**Virginia Standards of Learning**

### Oral Language

**5.1 The student will listen, draw conclusions, and share responses in subject-related group learning activities.**

1. Participate in and contribute to discussions across content areas.
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**5.3 The student will make planned oral presentations.**

1. Determine appropriate content for audience.
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3. Summarize main points before or after presentation.
4. Incorporate visual aids to support the presentation.
5. Use grammatically correct language and specific vocabulary.

**Objectives:**

* The student will actively participate and verbally express their feelings towards taking a test.
* The students will actively participate and verbally express the information they learned through the test-taking sessions.
* The student will be able to cognitively apply test-taking skills and use them effectively during a test.
* The student will be able to distinguish their achievement progress using the test-taking skills resulting from their tests.
* Given the proper test-taking skills, the students will be able to successful use these test-taking skills on their tests.
* Given the proper test-taking skills, the student will be able to distinguish what set of test-taking skills they will use for a  
    
  specific test.
* Students will imply these test-taking skills and excel on their core curriculum and show signs of progress.
* Students will be able to carefully analyze their test and use specific test-taking skills to complete the test

**Assessments**: When discussing homework, the students will express the skills they used and found to be helpful. Students will discuss   
  
what they learned and applied towards taking a test. Students will begin to see progress through their grades they obtain after learning   
  
the test skills during the first session.

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**

* Students will discuss their homework out loud during group. They will discuss what skill(s) they used on a test they took between the first session and this session. They will discuss how it helped them on their test. This activity should take 7-10 minutes.
* As a group, we will go over the test-taking skills again. Then I will pass out notecards. They will then view a board with four different rock band instruments. Each instrument will have labels stating “Very helpful”, “Neutral”, “Not helpful”, “Modify or Add”. The students will then write down the skill they personally think go with the labels and then place their cards with the specific labeled instrument. I will then pick a few notecards, read them out loud, ask which student placed that skill to that specific label and try to help them understand the importance or further explain the details of that skill, to better help them comprehend the skill and use it. This activity should take 10-15 minutes.
* In closing, we will reflect as a group what occurred during session and what they will take away from what they learned today. Then I will read them a story called, *Hooray for Diffendoorfer Day!*, by Dr. Seuss.

**Homework/ Ownwork**: The assignment that will be given for group is to write a reflection of their feelings towards the book read in   
  
session today.

**Group Stage and Emerging Issues:** The stage these students will be in is the working stage. They will become more familiarized   
  
with the strategies, apply them and use them for their benefit. They will be able to reflect and discuss their emotions.Issues that may

come across, students still feeling text anxiety and lack of test readiness. During next session, if this is an issue, we can go over ways   
  
to eliminate those feelings.

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